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POEMS

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RUE, THYME, AND MYRTLE.

A COLLECTION OF

POEMS AND SONGS.

BY

CHARLES EDGAR SPENCER.

PHILADELPHIA:
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TO

MRS. DR. J. D. AXLINE

THIS VOLUME OF JUVENILE PIECES IS INSCRIBED,

AS A SINCERE THOUGH HUMBLE TESTIMONY OF THE
DEEP AFFECTION OF

HER BROTHER.



P R E F A C E.

IN offering this small volume of juvenile productions to the public, the author would say that they were written without the least anticipation of ever having them published, merely for the pleasure which their composition afforded him; therefore, perhaps, they have served the only end that could be expected. But who has not at least a little vanity, especially among those who are given to the “sin of rhyming”? If they have afforded him pleasure, why may they not afford others the same, though in a less degree? Besides, as Pope very justly tells us, the only way that a writer can decide whether he can write or not is by appealing to the judgment of others, which certainly is no offense in itself. It was mainly the latter reason that induced the author to trespass upon the public by offering these humble productions to the better judgment of others. And, as his hope is limited for the success of even the best of his poems (for indeed it would be absurd to suppose that he could please, to any great extent, the taste of maturer minds at the age at which he composed these pieces), he will willingly abide the decision of those more competent to decide than himself, and be not greatly disappointed if they be condemned.

These poems were written upon "the impulse of the moment," without any reference to one another, and will, no doubt, be found incongruous as a whole. But may they not be likened, each with the impress of its peculiar passion or fancy, to the days in a week or month, some of which are bright and clear, others dark and cloudy,—and, after all, notwithstanding their inconsistency, be found to suit very well the times which produced them? They were all composed at the age of eighteen or younger; the first at fifteen, except one, which was written some little time before that age. But a poem, whether composed at fifteen or fifty, is worthy, according to the grade of its excellence, a certain amount of consideration from the reader; and it would, therefore, be ridiculous to offer excuses for the imperfection of these trifles under the plea of age.

In conclusion, the author would say, in the words of Byron, that his pieces cannot be considered strictly original; that they may have a casual coincidence with the books he has been in the habit of reading; but that he has not been guilty of intentional plagiarism. He produces them tremblingly, for he is well aware of their insignificance compared with the more happy productions of the day, and leaves them to the judgment of others without a recommendation. But if they wake a moment's pleasure in a sorrowing heart, if they cause a single eye to melt in compassion at another's griefs or failings, if they retard not in the least the progress of truth and virtue, the author will be content, without the poet's bays and the plaudits due to real merit.

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RUE, THYME, AND MYRTLE.

IN THE AUTUMNAL WOODS.

I.

ANOTHER year has vanish'd in the past
Since dreamy, blissful, sorry Autumn reign'd ;
Now once again the forest-leaves are cast,
And on the air a moment are detain'd,
As if to show how gorgeous all are stain'd,—
More glorious in their life's expiring day ;
E'en by my tread the forest is profaned,
Where, low in death, they sadly strew my way,
Like Beauty's rouseless sleep ere touch'd by foul decay.

II.

Thus year by year will roll forever on,
And each will bring its pilgrims young and gray,
Whose lives will fade as those before have gone ;
The Present still will be the mighty day ;
And every year will have its flowery May,
Calm Summer, arch'd with sky so blue and clear,
Hazed Autumn, breathing death so sadly gay,
And ice-chain'd Winter, gloomy, cold, and drear,—
Each in its turn to pass, forgot like this, my tear.

III.

Alas ! for strength, like beauty, must depart ;
An empire's dirge at last must needs be sung ;
The worm, the king, the gentle loving heart,
Low, low must sleep, return'd to whence they sprung,
And in the common tomb find rest among
Their predecessors, mouldering 'neath the sod.
Avails it aught that hearts be bold and young?
They still must wend the way that all have trod,
Doom'd by that Power inscrutable, conceiveless,—God.

IV.

The roses bud, then open fresh and bright
Until in regal loveliness array'd ;
And thus, a day, they bask in summer light,
And then—the common end of all—they fade.
Thou say'st, But who for that would fail to braid
A wreath while still they breathe their sweet perfume?
Yes, thou art right ; but there are others made
With lives less sunny, hearts o'erpal'd with gloom :
Go thou and smile,—a torch their darkness to illume.

V.

There were low voices whose clear laugh and song
Entranced my being, till it seem'd to dwell
Within their music, stealing soft along
In cadence sweet, past power of words to tell ;
But they are hush'd. Thy voice, O vesper bell !
(At whose wild, plaintive sweetness oft I sigh,
And that, e'en as I feel thy mystic spell,
To think that sounds so heavenly should die,)
Has fled away, and echo scarcely makes reply.

VI.

How calmly Autumn mounts his golden throne !
How dreamy blows the wind through every tree.
Now lingering 'mid the leaves to breathe a moan,
In sad reluctance on its way to flee !
The flowers on hill and dale have ceased to be ;
But e'en their stems, with downy seeds replete,
Recall a thrill of rapture back to me
From childish days, when on with dancing feet
I sought wild-flowers, though tired, and deem'd it passing sweet.

VII.

Yes, I have loved the forest as my home ;
For oft its whispers soothing peace could lend.
As now within its dim-lit aisles I roam,
Arch'd by the locking boughs that massy bend,
I oft have felt each towering tree a friend,
And scorn'd the friendship of a changing will ;
While, from I know not where, I heard descend
Strange voices when the forest seem'd most still,
That spake unto my soul and made my being thrill.

VIII.

And I have pensive stray'd where Nature's hush
Was broken only by the bickering stream,
Or by the carol of the distant thrush,
Whose warbling mingled sweetly with my dream ;
Then earth and sky with beings seem'd to teem—
The birth of Fancy—with all beauty fraught ;
And e'en the sun outpour'd a softer beam,
Till, bless'd, I built myself a realm of naught,
And dwelt forgetful in my palaced dome of thought.

IX.

I climb with reverent tread this ancient mound,*
Heap'd by those hands that wrote no other page;
But 'tis enough: they lived, and died, and found
A lowly couch in Earth, from youth to age;
Their bosoms once o'erflow'd with love and rage,
And throb'd with deep emotion, joy, and pain;
And some were vainly proud, and some were sage;
But now these senseless clods alone remain:
Ah! e'en the oaks grown o'er them seem to whisper—
Vain.

X.

They once were rulers of this busy land,
That haply bloom'd the Eden of the West;
The valley, cultured by a skillful hand,
The upland, from its pristine rudeness dress'd,
Made Nature smile; while o'er earth's fruitful breast
Was rear'd the peaceful dwelling here and there,
All fill'd with life, as bless'd as *man* is bless'd;
But, ah! this life is full of vexing care,
And happy is the heart that never knew despair.

* The mound here referred to is one of those built by the mound-builders, a pre-historic race, perhaps allied to the Aztecs of the South. These mounds are very common throughout various parts of Ohio and other States. They are filled with the remains of human bones; and sometimes curious specimens of crockery and stone axes and arrow-heads are disinterred by those who explore their interior. Mr. Bryant's lines concerning this "disciplined and populous race"—to which I am indebted for the hint of several thoughts—I here adduce as support for my supposition that the mound-builders were at least a partly civilized people.

XI.

Perchance some cloud-draped mountain, capp'd with
snow,
Was their Olympus, view'd with hallow'd fear.
Scorn not the prayer that pious hearts bestow ;
Their will is good, whate'er their souls revere.
They, haply, had their mighty Cæsar here,
And Cassius, fain to strike ambition dead.
Their lives were form'd, like ours, of smile and tear,
Of frustrate hope, of toil and error wed.
Oh, let us seek the right ; full quickly life is fled.

XII.

Methinks I see a lingering swain advance
Where he his lady's smile is wont to greet,
And she awaits him there as if by chance ;
'Tis vain ; their lips unite e'en as they meet !
An aged mother's heart doth anxious beat ;
Her loved, her only son is far away.
Oh, look ! the door is oped : he's at her feet !
Delicious tears of joy, that naught can stay,
Fall showering on his neck, tell what no words portray.

XIII.

Deep in the Past, their Homer strung his lyre,
Who, sage unletter'd, breathed his awful mind ;
Whose song—as his of Hellas shall expire—
Died heavenly ; nor is echo left behind.
And there were those so rapt they fain resign'd
Their souls to Music's power, transporting song.
But all their joys and griefs, both rude, refined,

Were but the waves that moved life's bark along ;
Now sleeping lowly as that once all-lusty throng.

XIV.

Still, much as life's quick-shifting scenes avail
For good and evil, they their portion bore.
When death is progress upward, why bewail ?
Rest, mighty nation ! doom'd to be no more !
As fades the Red man from his native shore,
So ye departed, e'en as fell your power ;
Still tenderly your tomb is sprinkled o'er
With Autumn's tributes shed, a golden shower,
That bear the impress bright of Summer's sweetest
flower.

XV.

I love the hazy, soft autumnal air ;
I love the woods when stain'd with many a dye ;
I revel in their chaste and mellow'd glare,—
Such glorious ruin needs provoke a sigh.
Perhaps beneath an oak I, dreaming, lie
To watch the leaves' sad quiver as they fall,
And feel 'twere bliss, like them, to calmly die,—
To sleep where oft is heard the mock-bird's call,
And let the Indian's couch replace the sombre pall.

XVI.

How truly sweet if May could last the year !
But sweeter far if Autumn reign'd for aye ;
For, to our hearts of dust, 'tis oft a tear
Is far more blissful e'en than to be gay ;
Then whatsoe'er awakes its gentle sway

Is balm,—an unction pour'd upon the heart ;
 'Tis that, as rapturous music dies away,
 Which bids the soothing tear-drops rise and start.
 O thou I love ! sad, beauteous Autumn, ne'er depart !

REMEMBRANCE OF KELLEY'S
 ISLAND, IN LAKE ERIE.

I SEEM to tread that isle anew
 Which lies in Erie's heaving breast,
 And watch again the sunset-hue
 Of gold and crimson in the west
 O'er tip, along the waters blue,
 Each wavelet with a sheeny crest.

Upon the beach, where calmly glass
 The waters in a slumber sweet,
 In fancy, now, a bonny lass
 Is stooping from a rock to meet
 And smooth the ripples, as they pass,
 With snowy hands and dainty feet.

Such was that placid evening scene ;
 And inly still returns a spell—
 O'erleaping years that lie between—
 As memory pictures every swell
 That lassie's feet, with many a sheen,
 Sent dancing as they rose and fell.

The sweetness of a lovely face,
The thoughts that grandeur does impart,
Still leave for aye a treasured grace,
Which prints their image on the heart ;
And thus that long-remember'd place
Can ne'er from out my soul depart.

A DREAM OF LIGHT.

ALL day the sleet fell thick and fast,
Swept on, and on, before the blast,
And smote the window as it pass'd.

All day the trees, with dreary wail,
Rocked fiercely in the wintry gale
Beneath their load of icy mail.

All day I dream'd of one no more,
And heard the wild uncertain roar,
And almost wish'd that life were o'er.

Till, pondering on that vanish'd face,
I saw it smile with softer grace,—
Smile from its old accustom'd place !

At eve the clouds were reft on high,
And dash'd like chariots through the sky,
Till none were left to greet the eye.

And all the stars, with paly light,
Came out against their azure height,
And, brightening, were the eyes of Night.

Then, with a smile no words define,
Afar, I saw that face divine
Look down with loving joy in mine !

And now, out in the midnight-day,
As calm the moon steals on her way,
Still 'neath her chaste, soft light I stray ;

While in her hazed, illusive beam,
The ice-gemm'd boughs, like diamonds, gleam,
And earth is but a fairy dream !

White, stilly, sleep the hills aglow,
Wrapp'd in their robe of ice and snow ;
A spell is cast o'er all below !

The hemlocks, bow'd as if in prayer,
Stand like the aged oppress'd by care,
With flowing locks of hoary hair.

The night-wind scarce breathes a moan ;
I hear no footfalls save my own,
And yet I am not here alone !

I feel bright eyes of deep delight ;
The icy trees are shimmering bright ;
My sterile heart is touch'd with light !

STANZAS TO THE WILD SWEET-
BRIER.

SWEET rose with spicy leaves, how oft,
When wayward roving fell and croft,
Have I with pleasure turn'd to thee,
And felt thy spell steal over me
Like moonlight o'er a troubled sea!

Not where they hold the Feast of Roses,*
In shadowy vales and flowery closes
Of Orient lands, where wreaths they twine
To deck the shrines of Love and Wine,
Is aught with breath so sweet as thine!

There's many a rose with brighter bloom
That sheds a transient, soft perfume;
Thy fragrance fades not with thy flower,—
Thy small green leaves possess their power
Through each calm, dreamy summer hour.

* Moore, in his "Light of the Harem," gives an account of the Feast of Roses held in the Vale of Cashmere:

"A happier smile illumines each brow,
With quicker spread each heart uncloses,
And all is ecstasy—for now
The Valley holds its Feast of Roses."

Thou emblem true of simple worth,
Scarce known, and born of humble birth,
Though unassuming, void of glare,
Thy presence e'en pervades the air,
And thus, though plain, art passing fair.

What childish dreams, so vain and sweet,
What boyish walks, with aimless feet,
Thou bring'st to me from hours no more,—
While now I sigh that they are o'er,
And love thee for those days of yore!

When winter winds shriek fierce and loud,
And earth has donn'd her snowy shroud,
When Yule-tide comes with wassail cheer,
When ghost nor goblin dares appear,*
And froward is the hoary year,

In braids and wreaths of winter-green
I twine thy hips of ruddy sheen
To deck my lady's tresses flowing,
And know not, when both fairer growing,
To which the mystic charm is owing.

Sweet hermit of the dale and hill,
Unpruned, and rear'd at Nature's will,

* "Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad."

Though few of hurrying throngs delay
To hail thee from life's busy way,
Accept my all,—an artless lay.

SONG.

IN the glorious autumn weather,
When the startled quail was calling,
Bonny May and I together
Wander'd where the leaves were falling.

And we pluck'd, from branches hoary,
Drupes that made our fingers bloody;
And I whisper'd, "In their glory,
None are like thy lips so ruddy."

When we found—where rocks all mossy
Hid the rabbit's coy recesses—
Chestnuts brown, I said, "Though glossy,
None are like thine eyes and tresses."

As the dreamy wind blew showers
Of the gorgeous leaves before her,
"Ah!" I thought, "they're meant for flowers,
And the forest-trees adore her."

And I told her though the sighing
Of the wind was Music's spirit,

That, if she were but replying,
It were lost,—I would not hear it !

“ But a kiss ? ” Demure and meetly
Show’d her face forbidding flushes ;
Half afraid, I kiss’d her fleetly,—
She but turn’d to hide her blushes !

But how quick the tears upstarted !
(Sometimes tears presage our blisses,)
Such would melt the iron-hearted !
Yes, I dried them all with kisses.

RUTH.

A SKETCH FROM LIFE.

"A beautiful and happy girl,
 With step as light as summer air,
 Eyes glad with smiles, and brow of pearl,
 Shadow'd by many a careless curl
 Of unconfined and flowing hair;
 A seeming child in everything,
 Save thoughtful brow and ripening charms,
 As Nature wears the smile of Spring
 When sinking into Summer's arms."

WHITTIER.

PART I.

O CHILD! with eyes so full of glee,
 And face unmark'd by sin or care,
 Of all the world, I'd turn to thee,
 For thou art pure and passing fair;
 And in my heart thou wak'st a joy,
 A rapture that is all divine,
 Till, once again, I am a boy
 And childhood's thoughtless bliss is mine!

'Twas early May; the sun had low declined;
 The trees, just putting on their leafy growth,
 Cast shadows long upon the tender grass;
 'Twas near the hour when laborers seek repose.
 A little village, nestled on a hill,

That held in prospect, smiling with the May,
The distant woods, all white with dogwood flowers,
The sloping upland, green with springing wheat,
And many a field, just new prepared for corn,
Seem'd peaceful as the placid eventide.
Still on the village street, with lusty shouts,
The school-boys linger'd on their way from school ;
Some by the little church, in thoughtless glee,
To stone the swallows on the belfry-eaves ;
Others (near home) to taunt with names uncouth
The tyrant of the playground, daily fear'd.

A little westward down the village street—
The last small dwelling—stood, in humble guise,
A cottage with a flowery garden-plot.
The cottage was o'erhung with climbing vines ;
And, in the grassy yard before the door,
Full many a rosebush, with artistic care,
Was pruned and twined upon the lattice-frames,
Presaging roses sweet in sunny June.
The beautiful surroundings spake of peace ;
And e'en the smoke, that hung in lazy wreaths
Above the chimney on the moveless air,
All voiceless, seem'd to whisper still of—Peace.

The bell had rung to tell the evening meal
Was waiting, and to call the farmer home ;
For he who own'd this cottage till'd the ground,
And plow'd and sow'd and reap'd, and liked it well.
The farmer's wife, who still was young and fair,
Was sitting in the door, beneath the vines,
To watch across the dale for his return.

Upon the step, beside the housewife's knee,
Were two small children,—one a boy of six,
With smiling face and open pleasant look ;
And near, a lovely girl, perchance of four,
With head o'erhung with showers of golden curls,—
The farmer named her Ruth, his only child.
The boy, whose name was Malcolm, was the son
Of Vane, the blacksmith, living o'er the way,
And daily came to play with little Ruth.
He looked up, smiling, at the mother's face,
Then kiss'd the little girl and homeward ran ;
And Ruth climb'd on the gate to see him go,
For oft they play'd together on the grass
Around the cottage, and among the flowers.

Sweet Ruth was known by all and loved by all :
The villagers would stop and speak to her,
And list her meet reply in childish phrase,
And laugh to find it sage for one so young ;
And some would give her playthings (worthless treasures),
Or smooth her flowing curls, or kiss her cheek.

The mother placed the child upon her lap,
And clasp'd the little dimpled hands in hers,
Then, bowing down with all a mother's love,
She gazed in thoughtful silence on her child.
The dancing eyes look'd up all fill'd with smiles ;
But, as the curly head at ease reclined,
Their lids droop'd low, till, seal'd with silken lash
(As waxen petals close the flowers at eve),
Sweet Ruth lay wrapp'd in sleep without a dream.

Across the mother's face there sped a smile,
That left a shade of sadness as it pass'd,
Like to a fleeting cloud in summer-time ;
Then, speaking half aloud, like one who holds
Deep converse with the teachings of the heart,
She spake as if she heard not her own voice :
"Oh, God ! if harm should come upon thee, child !
If thou shouldst die before *my* time shall come,
And I behold thee chain'd in icy death,
So beautiful and cold, like sculptured stone,
And all the brightness fled from out thine eyes !
I oft have roused thee from a peaceful sleep
(With beating heart), half fearful that 'twas death,
Then laugh'd at my own folly when thou smiledst,
And woo'd thee back to slumber with a kiss :
How anxious is the heart when full of love !
Or, worse, if he and I should leave thee thus
An orphan, yet to frame thy future life ;
For *I* have tried the sympathy of man,
And few are those who turn not cold away
From one that friendless threads the maze of life ;
'Tis frost, not dew, that melts th' unyielding rock.

"Fair child, with mien so gentle, heart so pure,
It cannot be that yet, in years to come,
The ways of life, inseparable from sin,
Will steal upon thee with their wonted power,
Till, blending as by nature with thy thoughts,
They twine in grossness round thy very soul,
Which now is pure as heaven, and undefiled !
No, no ! it cannot be—it *will* not be !
It may be so with others,—all beside ;

But thou, sweet child ! that slumberest on in peace,
 Unconscious of the snares thou yet shalt brave,
 So beautiful in innocence,—so still,—
 With features chisel'd like an Olympian god's,—
 Thou art a snowflake newly fallen from heaven,
 And, though thou minglest with the baser earth,
 Shalt rise up to thy native home again !

“*Thy* heart will never burn with deep remorse,
 Thyself thine own accuser,—woe of woes.
 But, ah ! was I not once, like thee, my babe,
 Unsullied ? pure ?—O God ! my heart is sick !
 I tremble for thee, O my darling child !
 For who can read the future ? what may come ?
 What passions, almost governless, may rise ?
 What dread temptations lure thee from the right ?
 Not those, whose feet have tried life's rugged way,
 Are sure but that, perchance, some hapless hour
 May come with evil fraught they think not of,
 With deeds that make the soul to fear itself !”
 She bow'd above her child in voiceless prayer.

* * * * * *

She knew not that the gate swung on its hinge,
 Nor heard her husband's tread as home he came.
 He stood a moment near her, then he stoop'd
 And kiss'd her cheek, and whisper'd, “Why so sad ?”
 She answer'd, “I was thinking,—that is all.”
 Then Ruth awoke, and laugh'd with childish glee
 To see her father home return'd at eve.
 And when the door was closed, and darkness came,
 And cheery stream'd the lamp-light in the night,

And merry voices sounded sweet within,
The little cottage, overhung with vines,
Still seem'd the same abode of Peace and Love,
And Happiness—if it abide on earth.

PART II.

I saw her when she sweetly smiled,
When, with unconscious, winning grace,
She half my willing heart beguiled ;
I thought there ne'er was lovelier face ;
But when I saw her long-lash'd eyes
O'erflow with tear-drops of despair,
I felt a sad, a sweet surprise,
That, weeping, she was more than fair !

Time is the scope of everlasting change.
Life is to follow in the wake of time,—
A day which has its morning, noon, and eve ;
For life is change, else 'twere but sluggish death.

'Twas sweet-breath'd May again, and years had
pass'd,—
Pass'd with their wonted smiles, tears, joy, and woe,
And were but in remembrance they had been.
The village still was peaceful as before,
And bore the same secluded, dreamy air,
As if it knew not of the busy world.
The cottages still seem'd as was their wont,
Save that they look'd more gray and sober brown
Amid the gathering dusk of twilight eve,
Ere night fell o'er and robed them in her shades.

The sparks flew out the blacken'd smithy's door
Into the darkness with a fitful glare ;
And loud the anvil rung with cheery sound,
As fell the sledge with measured sturdy blows,
The same as day by day for many a year.
But he, the smith, who, when his toil was done,
Closed up the shop and bent his homeward course,
Was not the same that had been there before.
His step was too elastic, and his face
Was scarcely bearded, but of manly cast ;
He was the boy—then grown to be a man—
Who roam'd at play among the cottage flowers.
'Twas well that Malcolm Vane should take the place
His father held in life : such is the law
That guides the tenor of the march of change.

The little cottage, peeping through the vines,
Was still surrounded by the rustic yard,
And bore the same appearance, save the shrubs
And roses, twining on their trellis-bars,
Were dress'd by hands more skillful than before.
The garden-plot was fill'd with rarest flowers,—
The stars and gems of all the neighboring woods,
Brought home by hands as lovely as themselves
Through all the years of girlhood, with a joy
That told the heart which loved the flowers and ferns
Was kindred to their beauty in its thoughts.

As rose the moon with large and ruddy face,
Half hid behind the eastern wooded hills,
There stood beside the little cottage gate
A maid so fair it could be only Ruth.

Her hair hung down in ringlets as of gold,
And trembled on the mellow air of eve
In bright profusion ; and her lovely face,
Though fairer in the bloom of womanhood,
Was still the child's, save that it bore a shade
Of sadness yet unsettled, new, and strange,
That was unmeet to one so beautiful.
She stood in silence, while a tear stole down
From 'neath the drooping lashes of her eye
(Lit by the moon, like dew upon a flower)
Across the damask softness of her cheek.
Then, clasping her white hands, as if in prayer,
She bow'd a moment low, while fitfully
Her proud lip quiver'd like a bow just sprung ;
And sobs broke forth, and her full-rounded form
Was shaken with emotion, dread, deep-stirr'd,
Like to a lily rock'd before the storm !
But when 'twas past—when evening's spicy breath
Bathed off the tear-drops from her fever'd cheek—
She was so lovely, lost in pensive mood
Beneath the moonbeams, misty, indistinct,
That Fancy might have deem'd her not of earth.

She barely started, as a hand clasp'd hers,
And as an arm stole gently round her waist
With loving pressure ; still, she look'd not up,
She spake not, moved not, but again a tear
Coursed, sparkling in the moonlight, down her cheek.
But when a kiss was press'd upon her lips,
The spell was riven, and her color came
And went alternate, and her voice broke forth
(Like some swift stream from out its mountain source,

In fitful bursts) and bore her soul upon it :
“Oh, Malcolm! kiss me not; you know me not!
Your love is too unsullied; seek a heart
That can return a seemly meed for such.
My heart is not for you,—it cannot be!
If you but knew me as I know myself,
Your arm would fall as if by palsy struck!”

She tried to loose his grasp, but, with an arm
Of gentle firmness, still he held her fast,
And spake in accents passionate as is love :
“Oh, Ruth! my Ruth! why has this come to pass?
Why have you ceased to love the one whose love
Was more for you than life, perchance than heaven?
For, ah! I fancied heaven to be your smile.
Did we not play together in the woods,
Around the cottage, and among the flowers?
And e’en in boyhood, when I kiss’d your lips
(For early stole that dream within my thoughts),
You said you loved me, and I knew but joy!
And, as my love grew with my riper years
Until it fill’d my being, made my life,
How oft I told you—ah, not *all*!—my heart!
And still you said you loved me; but, O God!
'Tis changed, and worse than if it ne’er had been.

“I felt it leave me,—saw it turn to *him*;
And oft as up the village street he drove,
With all his pride to mock my life of toil,
And you were seated by him, in my heart
I felt a chillness like an icy touch;
But still I trusted, for my love was firm.

And oft I watch'd your face at his approach,
And saw the color course up to your hair,
Leaving your brow as pallid as the snow ;
But when he spoke a word, or touch'd your hand,
The blood would mount again up to your cheeks,
While, with averted face and low reply,
Your eyes were scarcely raised from off the ground.
But still, oh, Ruth, I dared not doubt your love,
For weeks and months: the strength came by degrees,
Although I saw it change from me, and go
To one whose wife you knew you ne'er could be.
And yet my love is changeless ! still it burns
With all its wonted fierceness, quenchless, deep !
And, though you cease to love me, still my heart
Will turn unto the Ruth,—the Ruth of old,—
And love her in remembrance, call her dead."

While thus he spake, she stood in silence still,
Save now and then emotion shook her frame
And scatter'd glittering tears upon his hand ;
But, when he ceased, she sudden loosed his arm,
And fled among the vines, and answered thus :
" I never loved him as you say I did ;
'Twas but th' enchantment of an evil hour,
Which now is past ; my heart is ever thine !
Yet I will never wed you, Malcolm Vane ;
So now good-night,—farewell for evermore !"
She pass'd into the house ; and Malcolm Vane,
With downcast face and slow and nerveless tread,
Turn'd sadly homeward through the stilly night.

An hour had scarcely pass'd ere Ruth again
Came out, with hat upon her head, and shawl

Cast loosely o'er her shoulders ; in her hand
 She bore a small valise ; and, as the door
 Closed softly, she stood holding to the knob
 A moment, as if powerless to move.
 Then, passing through the little garden-plot,
 She cull'd a sweet bouquet of early flowers,
 And turn'd to look back at the cottage, wrapp'd
 In midnight silence, and most sadly wept,
 And shook with deep emotion as before,
 Then gazed a moment at the golden stars,
 Like calm forgiving eyes in highest heaven,
 And, weeping, slowly cross'd the darkling fields,
 And soon was lost amid the shades of night.

* * * * *

At morning, Sorrow, far worse than if Death
 Had clasp'd their loved one in his cold embrace,
 Hung brooding o'er the cottage, and the hearts
 Of those within bow'd down in hopeless woe ;
 For Ruth was gone ! The Ruth they loved so much,
 Their hope in life, the tie that join'd their hearts,
 Was gone, they knew not whither, nor in peace !
 Was gone, nor left a trace, except a note,
 To tell them what her lips could never speak :
 That she would ne'er come back, unless in years ;
 She could not stay to shame them with her shame,
 For she was not the Ruth she was before.
 And, as the God of heaven beheld her woe,
 She loved them more, far more, than words could tell,
 And still would love with life and after death !
 That they should now remember her as dead,—
 As if her death had been in those sweet days
 When she so loved the flowers, when pure and good ;

And they should keep her garden as it was,
And tend the flowers for love of erring Ruth ;
That they should tell to Malcolm all her shame,
For he would shed a tear for her he loved ;
But let the unfeeling world, unloving, cold,
That would but glory in her fall, go on
With selfish care, and know not of her fate.

PART III.

None knew her, none could tell her name.

How came she in the rushing stream ?
Were hands less fair than hers to blame ?

Perchance 'twas in a frenzied dream
She sought her cold and watery bed,
Or, haply, goaded by despair ;
Yet, weep for one so lovely, dead,
Though icy be her golden hair !

'Twas in a city full of throbbing life,
That coursed through all its streets and darker ways,
In waves which scarce knew respite e'en at night,
And roll'd continual on, and came, and went,
And changed, and mingled, till the gazing eye
Turn'd weary from the ever-swaying throng,
Half dizzy at the faces new and strange ;
Where, towering high, the church with steepled dome
Seem'd mutely ever pointing up to heaven
Beside the palaced den of blackest hell ;
Where all the hard-sought learning of the world
Was gather'd, till it rival'd with its lore
The famed Athena's city, yet where few

Cast off the coil of ignorance to be wise ;
Where high the imposing mansion loom'd aloft
Above the hovels fill'd with want and crime ;
Where one unceasing stream of life roll'd on—
The good, the bad, the wise, the rich, the poor—
Together to one haven,—all to death.

'Twas winter ; and, as night fell o'er in gloom,
The full-orb'd moon climb'd up her heavenward path,
And now and then peep'd through the rifted clouds—
That moved now slow, now fast, before the wind,
Like sterile, rugged islands in the sky—
With cheerful light ; then leaden darkness came,
And left, perchance, a single star in heaven.

The early hours sped on, and then the rout
In giddy splendor gather'd at the ball
And midnight revel, where the windows blazed,
And laughter, wine, words, songs, and smiles were free
As if they were not phantoms of delight.
As still the hours pass'd on, the city's heart
Grew weary of the tumult of the day,
And sank almost to silence and repose,
Save now and then disturb'd by clattering wheels
That hurried on, and hollow echoing steps
Of those returning from the night's debauch,
Or sadly call'd, perchance, from pleasant dreams
Unto the chamber visited by Death,
Or drowsy watchman on his lonely beat.

Upon the old and massy bridge that spann'd
The river rushing, gurgling on below,

'Twas far more lonely at that ghostly hour
Within the silent suburbs of the town ;
For none but stragglers pass'd that gloomy way,
With noiseless tread, and hearts that plotted crime.
The river had been frozen, and the ice,
Part melted, broken by the current's force,
Went floating like small icebergs on the stream,
And struck the piers that held aloft the bridge,
And splash'd the water with a mournful sound,—
A sad continual gurgling, like the breath
And moans of myriads drowning in the flood.
The wind blew chill and blustery ; on the bridge,
The lamps, that bicker'd blue through long neglect,
Seem'd pinch'd as if with cold, and flutter'd faint,
Like to the heart in sickness, when it hangs
In wavering indecision near to death.

The moon had just been shining for a space,
And sending, as by magic, o'er the stream
A dancing splendor as of very joy ;
Then ebon darkness came, and quick a step
Fell stealthily upon the shadowy bridge.
It was a female figure that came on
Unto the centre, and lean'd o'er the rail,
And gazed a moment at the surge below,
Then, rising up, stood muttering to herself,
“ Yes, that shall end it ; hunger, shame, and sin.
What ! do I shrink ? As hell is in my heart,
'Tis better than a life of conscious shame !
Oh, inconsistent ! do I fear to die,
When life is willful crime,—a living death ?
Ah, now 'tis gone ; 'twas but a moment's thought ;

For resolution wavers, then is firm.
Oh, God ! that I could weep ! I once could weep ;
But tears, so eloquent in innocence,
Are frozen in the guilty heart, and seem
A dull and heavy weight upon the soul.

“ A leap, a moment’s struggle,—and all’s o’er !
No fond returning thoughts, like cutting steel,
Of those so dear, that peaceful, happy home,
Of virtue’s blissful days, of him I love,
Will follow ; if they do (and, ah, they may),
It cannot be the worse, for this is hell !
My child—O God, ’tis well !—has gone before,
And why may *I* not follow, though uncall’d ?
Explore the future, though with all my sin,
If ’tis to keep from sinning still the more ?
I only ask for justice ; let it come !
For there is that within my soul which speaks,—
A voice that whispers, God is Justice, Love ;
That weariness at last shall rest in Peace :
Ah, none but God can read the heart and judge !”

She stood, with upturn’d face, in silent prayer ;
And as the moon again shone through the clouds,
How beautiful she seem’d ! ’Twas fallen Ruth,
With form so graceful, face so passing fair,
Whose flowing curls lay on the chilly gale,
A seeming halo round about her head !

’Twas but a moment’s flutter o’er the rail,
A sudden, sullen splash, a gurgling scream,
And, for an instant, on the yeasty foam

There lay a glittering mesh of golden hair,
Which sunk just as the moonlight fled away.
Then silence came again, save still the low
Uncertain splashing of the darkling stream
Kept seemly concord with the wind of night,
And save that from the distance came the wild
Alarm of fire, while lurid redness glared
Against the sky ; but still the city slept,
And left the toil to those whose task it was.

* * * * *

At morning, in a pile of drifted ice,
Was found a lady dead and paly fair,
Whose tangled hair, though fill'd with ice and mud,
Still glitter'd as the sunbeams in the east.
And as a man, who lived by finding such,*
Upbore her to the shore, he told his mate
'Twas but a murder or a suicide.
But no one knew her, none could tell her name ;
And so, without a tear, they bore her on
Between the gleaming mansions of the dead,
And placed her in that lowly couch of rest
Where all must sleep, and sleep without a dream.
And though they raised above her nameless grave
No eulogizing stone, 'twas all the same ;
For such tells to the mortal eye the praise
(If praise be due the senseless dust below),
While Heaven but reads the tablet of the heart.

* The reader will remember the water-side characters in "Our Mutual Friend."

PART IV.

Plod on, O weary course of life !

Plod on with year and month and day,
But what are all thy toil and strife

When o'er? A winter past away !
'Tis well that Time ne'er curbs his flight,
And life is short; for, Man, compare
Thy fleeting hours of joy, delight,
With all thy wonted years of care.

'Twas in the early May, when airs were soft,
When farmers plow'd and sow'd their fields again,
That Ruth departed from the home she loved.
And at the cottage farm, so neatly kept,
Some fields were partly plow'd, and some half sown,
And over-night, within the furrow'd glebe,
The share was left just where the team was stopp'd,
In readiness to wait the morrow morn.
But when the morrow came, and with it woe,
The fields were left untouch'd, as if forgot,—
Half planted and half plow'd, just as before ;
And long the plow stood rusting in the earth,
Until the raindrops loosed it, and it fell.
'Twas still the same when summer stole apace,
And in the scattering rows of puny corn
The weeds grew up and spread their choking growth,
Prolific, like to follies in the heart,—
A wild, neglected waste of lusty naught.
And thus, as years pass'd on, the cottage farm
Fell worse and worse in ruins day by day ;

And e'en the roses in the little yard,
When, mouldering with the rest, their frames decay'd,
Grew spreading at their will, unpruned and wild,
Like their uncultured cousins of the hills.

At first the farmer and his wife were bow'd
In hopeless woe for Ruth, their only child ;
But soon reaction came, and with it hope,
For they, so easy to forgive, so good at heart,
Thought they could bring her back unto her home.
And then they sought her far and near ; but none
Could tell them of her, none had seen their Ruth :
Still hopefully they search'd until a year
Was past, and then that heavy load came back,
For people told them surely she was dead.
Then they abode alone, and sought her not,
But never ceased to grieve for her they loved,
Nor e'er forgot how sweet the songs she sung,
Nor how her gentle voice and smile could smooth
The rugged way of life's declining years.

Before another year was gone, a change,
A pallor, crept upon the mother's face,
That told the woeful sickness of her heart ;
But ere she died she said that it was well,
For who would wish to live without a hope ?

The farmer then was left alone on earth ;
And gradually his hair turn'd silvery white,
And hung uncut about his careworn brow,
Like winter's snowy locks upon the hills :
The dreary winter of his life was come.

His mind, at first, grew shadowy, indistinct,
As objects to the eye at twilight eve ;
Then total darkness came, a weary wreck,
A chaos of the intellect ; and Hope
Stole back in phantasy, and he was bless'd :
He watch'd for Ruth's return from morn to eve.
Thus he would wander o'er the grass-grown paths
Around the cottage, or upon the street,
And stand and gaze about with vacant look,
As if he scarce knew who or where he was.
And whomso'er he met he ask'd, in words
That proved how vague and scattering were his
thoughts,

If Ruth was come,—if his dear Ruth was come.
When answer'd with evading, pitying words,
He smiled, and slowly shook his hoary hair,
And mutter'd, “ Ah ! and then she has not come ?
But she will come to-day,—will come to-day ; ”
And then would totter on his way again,
And mutter to himself, in hollow tones,
“ Yes, she will come to-day, will come to-day.”

Oft he would stop beside the smithy's door,
And Malcolm Vane would leave his toil within,
To come and talk to him in hopeful words,
While tears of heartfelt pity fill'd his eyes.
But soon they miss'd the old man on the street,
Save at the smithy or beside his gate,
Where oft he loiter'd, sitting in the sun ;
And then he wander'd not from out the yard ;
Then sat upon the cottage-steps ; and then
The kindly neighbors said he was no more.

They laid him 'neath the waving churchyard grass,
And, as the clods fell sullen o'er his home,
Full many a simple heart was touch'd with woe ;
But Malcolm Vane's were tears a son might shed.

Not many winters pass'd ere Malcolm's hair
Was sprinkled through with silver, ere his face
Bore marks of age unsuited to his years :
His life was swifter than the wing of Time.
But still he bore his part,—his humble part :
Oft when he had his iron heated white
(And hammer partly raised), he let it cool,
Nor struck a blow ; and many marvel'd why ;
But none within the village read his thoughts.

Though sad, this is my story,—sad as life.
It yet may have its sequel in *that* life,
That brighter day in future, without eve,
We hope for, cherish deep within the heart.

FISHING SONG.

OH, come ! oh, come with me,
While smiling May is in the land,
And gather flowers upon the lea,
Where roves the droning humble-bee,
While airs are soft and bland,
And angle in the stilly brook,
That mirrors back the sky of blue
And passing clouds of snowy hue,
And hear the thrush from many a nook
Sing songs forever new !

Oh, come ! I'll weave of flowers
A chaplet for thy wavy hair ;
And in the leafy forest-bowers
With tale and song we'll pass the hours,
Forgetting time and care ;
And, angling in the shady stream,
We'll watch the wavelets glide away
And shake the rushes green and gay,
Till eve, unmark'd, with mellow gleam,
Steal in the place of day.

ODE TO NINA.

IMITATION OF ANACREON.

VULCAN cast a vase of gold
In a garnish'd magic mould.
O'er its sides in clusters twine,
Ripe to yield their ruby wine,
Grapes like Hebe's ruddy lips,
Sweeter than the cup she sips.
Bacchus gave the vase to me,
For I love festivity :
Thanks to Bacchus ! pass the bowl,
Let us drink with heart and soul.

He who quaffs this genial cup
Sees, serenely mirror'd up,
Her he loves, with soft surprise
Beaming from her laughing eyes.
Darling Nina smiles to me :
Ah ! I love no one but thee,
With thy lips of ruby hue :
Yes, I drink, and kiss them too !

In the liquid depth I see,
Now reflected back to me
From the polish'd golden side,
Through the fragrant rosy tide,

Hair, like gleaming rays of light,
Streaming backward soft and bright,
O'er her arms descending low,
Like the autumn's hazy glow :
'Neath a brow of purest white,
Crystal springs of soft delight
Beam, from out their depth of blue,
Dreamy sweetness to the view ;
And with each enamoring glance
Cupid casts a burning lance :
Though my heart is sadly sore,
Cupid, rend it even more !
Though 'twere death to see that eye,
I would look again,—and die !
Cheeks, whose varying ruddy glow
Seems like rose-leaves o'er the snow,
Change their soft translucent hue
With each sweet emotion new,
And with blushes coy impart
Love's soft language to the heart
Far more sweetly than express
Words that mean but blissfulness :
Dimpled chin of curving grace
Adds its beauty to her face,
In whose midst, by Venus crown'd
King of realm so plump and round,
Love doth sit, with gentle sway
Bearing every palm away,
On his soft and dimpled throne,
Made for him, and him alone :
Lips, whose nectar'd breath divine
Lends the fragrance to the wine :

Neck of whiteness : snowy arms :—
Ah ! I leave a thousand charms
To enraptured fancy's flight,
Which to dream of is delight !

Drink ! let draughts to Nina flow
Of our nectar here below !
Nina, press thy lips to mine
Through the fragrant rosy wine ;
Let me kiss thee at my will !
Could I ever kiss my fill ?

W I N T E R.

I WANDER'D o'er the windy hill,
Through sombre woodlands gaunt and bare,
Cross'd fallow leas, deserted, still,
Nor herd nor tinkling bell was there :

Pluck'd this,—the only leaf of green
Surviving from the summer day,—
A hardy fern, that grew between
The ancient rocks with lichen gray.

I stood where oft in pleasant dream
I stretch'd me in the summer shade,
Beside the gurgling forest-stream,
All fringed with violets through the glade ;

Where, half awake, 'twas mine to hear
The humble-bee among the flowers,
And muse on themes to memory dear
To while the pensive stilly hours :

But all was sterile, changed, or dead ;
The bees and flowers were there no more ;
The brook congeal'd,—its music fled ;
How like the hopes of years before !

The solemn woods, gloom-veil'd and dim,
Seem'd stretching forth to grasp the gale
Their long bare arms, like spectres grim,
With menace weird and sullen wail.

Sweet sung one lone benighted bird :
Ah ! deem not thou the heart to cheer
With *one* sweet song, or smile, or word ;
'Twill leave the gloom more dark and drear !

I roved, and dream'd of beauty flown,
Dejected by the wintry change ;
Meseem'd as in a throng alone,
Where every face is new and strange ;

Or stood as one who sadly bends
O'er urns of loved departed clay :
The leaves and flowers had been my friends,
I wept that they were pass'd away !

I sought, yet knew not what I sought,
For vagueness whelm'd my weary mind ;
Though dim-discern'd, still, still methought
'Twas something dear, not there to find !

INCONGRUITY.

I HEARD two lovers' mingling laughter,
 Heard friends bewail their idol dead,
Heard wedding-bells ring gayly after,
 Heard Hunger's voice imploring bread.

At eve, I heard fair sisters singing,
 Heard hopeless moans of chronic pain
Heard revelers' glasses loudly ringing,
 Heard vagrants curse the falling rain.

At morn, I saw a maid of beauty
 As from the street they bore her dead,—
A sinner. Strangers did their duty ;
 Some laugh'd, but not a tear they shed.

I heard fair gossips talk delighted :
 “A lovely lady bought and sold !
But men, you know, though old and blighted,
 Are handsome if they have the gold !”

AMONG THE PINES AT MIDNIGHT.

"Incipe Mænalios mecum, mea tibia, versus.
Mænalus argutumque nemus pinosque loquentes
Semper habet." VIRGIL.

O WHISPERING Pines!

Why sing ye such a melancholy lay?
Why burst ye forth in sighs and fitful sobs,
So like some child whose heart is near to break?
Has Atys' madness spread through all the grove,
And thus ye love to hear your frenzied voice
Rise wildly, like the hopeless wails of some
Benighted soul, whose hollow echoes wake
The Stygian stream, and wane to shrilling moans,
Just audible upon the midnight air,
Quick turn'd to mutterings of a maniac?

Ye sadder sigh! Oh, would that I might read
Your answer! I have thought, while listening to
Your wild and mystic harmony, that sounds
So strange are never breathed for human ears,
And that perchance ye hold communion with
The spirit-land, and those unearthly strains
Are whisper'd meaningly unto the souls
Of those departed. I have dream'd that all
The strains of plaintive music, which pervade
Your every tuneful, sad, demoniac wail,

Are songs of melting pity for the woe
Of those whose evil deeds have made their lives
A curse. For hearts, though vile, must still retain
A tinge of childish purity and love,
Which, e'en though dim, are seen by Virtue's eyes ;
Then Sympathy bestows her all,—a tear.

Ye winds, now sighing mournfully and low
Among the tufted canopies above,
Oh, loudly revel while the midnight lasts,
For solemn darkness seemly with you mates !
Ha ! now ye rise and grasp the sturdy pines ;
Ye wrestle with their graceful swaying tops ;
Ye tune the lyres of Nature ! sing the dirge
Of our departed hopes, so fill'd with sad
And dreamy horror, that the dew-drops fall
Affrighted from the shrubs and flowery bells,
To hide themselves upon the bosom of
Their mother, Earth.

I oft have watch'd you, Pines !
When warring elements engaged along
The sky ; when through the leaden dome of heaven
The Thunderer hurl'd his lurid bolts of ire,
That for a moment lighted up the gloom
With ghastly light, and changed the things of earth
(Amid the glare that struck the startled eye)
To spectral forms ; then all again was black.
When dire the storm dash'd, yelling, 'thwart your tops,
With laughing moans and wailings of despair,
I half imagined, gazing through the night,
That all your misty forms, whose boughs did lash

And menace in the darkness, were dread ghouls,
Of fell Plutonian shape, in revelry ;
And half believed with strange, mysterious bows
And impious tongues ye spake the language of
The nether world.

But when the moonlight streams
In all its lovely majesty upon
Your sylvan bowers, then, O Pines, I love you !
And when the west-wind's sigh is barely heard,
Like silvery whispers breathed from realms above
Or wafted from the Islands of the Blest,
I listen to your pensive melody
And drink your every murmur as it were
A draught of nectar from a hand unseen.
And when the stars come out,—the beacons bright
That guide the soul to its eternal rest,—
When Ursa Major gilds the northern sky,
Scarce mark'd between the boughs that sigh o'erhead,
I stand in rapt forgetfulness of life,
In sweet enchantment, in a land of song ;
And, as a child that slumbers faintly hears
Its mother's lullaby and peacefully
Dreams on, I dwell in soft oblivion, lull'd
To rest.

How old are ye, primeval Pines,
Ye stately monarchs of your dark ravines
And sombre hills? Your giant trunks are answers.
Ah, oft have blustery winters, summers bright,
Return'd and pass'd since first ye spread your leaves
In youthful freshness to the forest air.

The Red men lived and died ; and, mournfully,
Full many a time was sung beneath your boughs
The solemn death-chant, when some warrior grim
Was starting on that pilgrimage, still wrapp'd
In fable, to the great Ponemah ;* yet
Ye then were old, your years unnumber'd. Death,
To you, is but a far-off spot,—a vague
Unmeaning shadow, scarce discern'd,—so far
Within the hazy future that it seems
A dark hallucination on the verge
Of glorious life immortal. Still, 'tis true
That ye, like meaner things, at last must die,
And, with the worm that clings unto your leaf
And deems its home an ample world of space,
Your forms symmetrical shall prostrate fall
(The sad decay of grandeur) low before
Consuming Time. Ah, hark ! the whippowil
Flits ghost-like o'er my solitary way.
'Tis gone ; 'tis hid in neighboring gloom ; its cry,
So startling for a moment, now is still.
It was the spirit—robed in midnight shades—
Of passing Time.

O Pines ! hath not your voice
The gift of divination, as, of old,
Dodona's sacred groves presaged the rise
And fall of empires ? If our hearts were school'd
To read your murmurs, as the seers of eld

* Professor Longfellow, in his beautifully original poem, "Song of Hiawatha," gives the word "ponemah" as meaning the hereafter :

"To the kingdom of Ponemah,
To the land of the Hereafter."

Did catch a deeper meaning in the wind,
It might be even so.

I oft have stray'd
Among your unfrequented wilds, and gazed
With wonder at your plummy crowns above,
So grandly beautiful that, in a sea
Of voiceless contemplation, I did lose
My being, and did feel my soul exalted.
But list that swelling burst of harmony,
So wildly sweet that, though it thrills my heart
Like harp-strings touch'd by angel-fingers, still
'Tis fill'd with horror ; but like tempting fruits,
Whose juices, though composed of sweets and sours,
Are more delicious than the one or other.
Thus I have felt the power of your song ;
For in my pensive moods of loneliness
Your lays, that rise and fall in various tone,
Are those most kindred to my listening heart,
Which hangs upon your wailings e'en with rapture.
Yes, oft I glory in your wildest strains,
And love your saddest music as it falls
Sublimely on the fragrant forest air ;
For in my soul there is a voice that chimes
So dreamily with all your mystic chords,
That I would live with you in brotherhood
And dream with you for aye.

WHEN I SHALL WRITE OF DANDIES.

"Off, coxcomb!"

SHADE of Aladdin ! bring thy lamp and scour,
That I the awful Genie now may hail.
Go, Genie ! seek a roc, and, by your power,
Pluck every feather from its ponderous tail,
And bring the trophies to me ere an hour ;
Mind, by the lamp ! I tell you not to fail,
For I must have a pen. A gander-feather
Is, for my theme, too paltry altogether !

O Vivien ! revoke your transformation,
And raise the crafty Merlin from his grave ;
For he must bleed the asses of our nation,*
And every sanguine drop securely save,
And boil the same—by magic incantation—
Down to a hogshead full, or so (the knave !) ;
Such ink I *must* have when at dainty writing,
Else, sure, the dandies I'd be sorely slighting !

Great Jove ! I humbly pray thou wilt discover,
Yea, to a wondering world one fact disclose,
By sending Hermes down to watch the lover
The while soft inspiration sweetly flows :

* The " asses of our nation " is a title of honor conferred upon the Salary-Grabbers by certain of my friends.

Find how much tinted paper's scribbled over
Per year by maids for musky *billets-doux*,
For I must have full that amount of paper,
Exhaling fumes of amorous, musky vapor !

O Phœbus ! truly "'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd" that evermore
The cursed dandy—silly degradation—
Should not pollute our free Columbian shore ;
But, after all, we have *one* consolation :
(I truly pity each, a harmless bore)
The merchant's wares demand a brisker selling ;
But, sooth, about the pay 'tis doubtful telling.

Now, since I am a votary of Apollo,
O Muses, pray take heed of my request :
When I shall write of this poor, brainless, hollow
Peacock, with naught but feathers and a crest,
Scan every line, and all my wanderings follow,
And burnish off my rough but honest stress,
Lest, with disgust, I make a sorry blunder,
And scribble words less mild than Jove or thunder !

And now I've done, until each invocation
Shall lend its separate aid on which to lean.
Ah me ! who would not quake with consternation
To think of dandies venting mighty spleen ?
For then we should have scenes of devastation
Such as old Gæa never yet hath seen !
Jove, I must stop ! my pen, a gander-feather,
Is, for my theme, too paltry altogether !

LISTENING.

THE dew-drops sparkle brightly in the sheen of mellow
light,
That beams from every window with a splendor clear
and bright ;

And halo'd crowns of glory wreath the leaflets' quiv-
ering tips,
And sleepy roses tremble, shaking moisture from their
lips.

While on with varied cadence, like æolian whispers'
fall,
The music swells serenely up the panel'd oaken hall ;

And, blending with the dancers' tread that timely jars
the floor,
It falls upon the night air with a whirling, giddy roar.

And through the open windows, from exotic flowers
rare,
The heavy perfume lades with sweets the chilly mid-
night air ;

And now and then a silvery peal of laughter, loud and
clear,
Is heard above the murmur, falling sweetly on the ear !

But still, methinks, below the gloss, like breakers in the
sea,

A something jars upon the heart, e'en in the festive glee ;

And, as I stand and listen to the music in the hall,
A heaviness comes o'er my heart,—a shadow over all !

TEMPLE OF THE IMAGINATION.

I REAR'D me up a temple to the skies :
Its towering domes and bright ethereal walls
Are not colossal piles to glut the eyes
Of those who kneel to glare ; for in its halls
No foot e'er wakes an echo, as it falls,
Along the glorious vaults that bend o'erhead ;
And yet this awful stillness ne'er appalls,
As through its vast extent I moveless tread ;
For aught I wish to hear, without a voice is said !

And, lo, its walls low sink, or broad expand,
Touch'd by the mystic sceptre of the will.
E'en angels enter if I but command !
Or man each grand saloon may sudden fill,
In whom strange jarring passions, good and ill,
Are ever warring, and I view his heart :
Oft Thought and Dreams are there, and all is still ;
There those I love return, and joy impart :
O viewless Temple mine, thou far surpassest art !

ODE TO THE WINTER WIND AT
NIGHT.*

HOWL ! thou ghostly Wind of night,
Shrieking hoarse with wild delight ;
Dashing through the trees without,
Like some fell satanic rout ;
Moaning sad like one insane,
Deep convulsed with mental pain ;
Rapping on the window-glass
Rudely ominous as you pass ;
Croaking like an aged crone
O'er her magic spells alone :
Guest unbid at every door,
Shriek ! I love to hear thee roar.

Now the leaf is sere and dead ;
Now the clouds are overhead ;
Leaden do the footsteps sound
On the rough and frozen ground ;
Gloomy hoots the horned owl ;
From the manor, list the howl

* After this ode had been written several months, while reading Thomas Buchanan Read's "Windy Night" I noticed a slight similarity in the first part of this piece with certain parts of his. Perhaps the resemblance of ideas is imaginary ; but, if there is any, it is accidental. Though I vouch for the originality of this ode, I willingly resign the preference to Mr. Read's "Windy Night," on the ground of its having been written first.

Of the watch-dog, yelping still
At a sprite that haunts the hill :
Shriek, O Wind ! 'tis well to be
Jocund in such company.

Hark ! the distant abbey-bell
Rings a solemn spectral knell,
Not impell'd by human power ;—
'Tis the wind at midnight hour !
But 'tis in the hamlet said
That 'tis by the unhappy dead,
And that monks, entomb'd below,
'Neath where vines of ivy grow,
Clambering o'er the murky walls,
Shivering leave their icy palls,
And, beside the altar gray,
Crumbling, mouldering to decay,
Kneeling on last summer's weeds,
Tell their blessed rosary beads.
Rave, O Wind ! thy voice is meet
To the brain with such replete.

List ! along the chimney-tops,
Sharps and flats with sudden stops,
Piping solemn, lively, shrill,
Like to Pan upon his quill.
List the jarring window-sash—
Hark that distant sullen crash !
Moan, O Wind ! I love to hear
All thy wild, unearthly cheer.

SONNET.

AH, Lady, thou art fair ; and in thy face
There dwells a sweetness that was all to me,—
A mystic charm, a witching, tender grace,
Which made me feel my soul would turn to thee.
Ah, Lady, there is that within my heart
Which *might* have been—I reck not if could be—
Aroused to noble birth, and made to start
To glorious being.—Thou possess'd the key
That would unlock my soul ; thou couldst impart,
With but a word, a touch, a smile of thine,
A deep, soul-stirring impetus, which art
Is powerless to move ; thou couldst like wine
Intoxicate the senses ; but 'tis past,
Although the scar may haply ever last.

O'ER THE HILLS.

A SUMMER IDYL.

PART I.

If guileless as I deem thou art,
Come o'er the green-clad hills with me,
And fill this void within my heart ;—
I'll give my heart to thee !

When morning climbs the eastern sky
In ashy robe of modest gray,
Whose form, uncertain to the eye,
Is still the ghost of day,—

When crows the cock with drowsy will,
Half doubtful of the coming light
Till answer'd long and loud and shrill,
Then crows with lusty might,—

When first the birds, before the sun,
Are singing in the orchard-tops,
And o'er the grass the web is spun
All hung with dewy drops,—

Then I will lead thee where the sight
Can first behold, o'er hills afar,
The growing blaze of rosy light
O'erawe the morning star.

We'll watch the plowman guide his share,
Who, while the dew is on the fell,
Begins his toil with zealous care
Before the breakfast-bell ;

And see the smoke in columns rise
From cottage-chimneys through the trees,
Or lie in clouds of azure dyes
If sleep the morning breeze.

Oh, come ! I barely ask of thee,
Whene'er my wayward heart is sad,
That thou wilt shed a tear with me,
And smile if I be glad.

PART II.

When sunbeams quiver on the hill,
And scarce the aspens, shivering, beat,
When Nature's voices all are still,
And pours the noonday heat,

I'll take thy warm-thrill'd hand, and climb
My native hills of shady wold,
And while the hours with storied rhyme
From pages quaint and old.

Where rocks arise, around whose breast
The wild rose twines her dainty arms,
And seems a Dian gayly dress'd
In more than rustic charms,

We'll rest us by some spring, that laves
Its mossy vase with nectar clear,
And quaff our fill, and make its waves
Dance o'er and disappear.

We'll traverse many a bosky shade,
Where flowers bloom their transient day,
Like modest worth unknown, to fade,—
Scarce noticed, pass away,—

Or rove some fairy-haunted vale,
Where fern in stately beauty grows,
Where wild vines climb with tendrils frail,
And Nature feels repose.

Upon the beech I'll carve thy name,
Tell how the tree was sung of eld,
Or how the lightning's lurid flame
Its sacred boughs repell'd.*

Say, wilt thou go? Thy will shall be
The cynosure to guide our way :
I ask but thou wilt weep with me,
And smile if I be gay.

PART III.

At even-fall 'tis sweet to stray
Where scythes slip through the tufted grass,
And hear them in the scented hay
Cut keenly as they pass ;

* The Indians believed the beech-tree is never struck by lightning.

And list the robin's wanton song
Among the mossy orchard-trees,
And smell the spice that floats along
Like balm upon the breeze ;

Or, when the hamlet's simple spire—
Which, save at eve, in gray is dress'd—
Is gilded as by hallow'd fire
From out the golden west,

To watch the circling swallows wheel
High o'er the church on graceful wing,
And, solemn, slow, with measured peal,
To hear the vesper ring ;

Or, when dim objects half deceive,
To see the mists creep o'er the vale,
Like nymphs, scarce seen, attending Eve,
Whose silvery garments trail ;

While borne upon the evening air
Are strains of some far-mellow'd song,—
Haply some milkmaid, ruddy, fair,
Whose lay the hills prolong.

These shall be ours ; and smiles more soft
That hide-and-seek o'er Nature's face,
Forever sweet, and changing oft,
Which words can never trace.

Come, let us go ; thou art my peer !
Thy simple ways are thine alone :

If I shall drop a pensive tear,
Thy tear will dry my own.

PART IV.

When shadowy Night, of Ethiop dye,
Outspreads her garb of sombrous black,
And sounds her march along the sky,
Each star in its wonted track,

We'll view the constellations, named
From many a theme of mythic lore,
The heroes, dames, and creatures famed,
Placed there for evermore,

And muse upon the boundless space
Whose paths by viewless suns are trod,
So distant, thought ne'er grasp'd their place;
Then ask if there be God!

When all the leaves are fitful stirr'd
By Night's cool breath, whose sighs impart,
In ghostly whispers plaintive heard,
Like sadness to the heart,—

When horn'd Selené stoops above
(Just peeping o'er) the western height,
As whilom thus her sleeping love
She kiss'd with calm delight,—

Then we will stray in holy thought,
Most seemly with the solemn hour,

While all the soul, with reverence fraught,
Bows to the viewless Power.

As to the rose is summer light,
As are the rivers to the sea,
As Hope to man, as stars to night,
So is thy smile to me.

Ah, come ! My heart inclines to thee
As northward turns the magnet-bar,
For thou dost smile and weep with me ;—
Thou art my guiding star.

SONG.

AFTER THE STYLE OF MOORE.

THOUGH loving be but sadness,
The dream, though sad, is dear,
For every scene of gladness
Is water'd by a tear.

Though flowers bloom for fading,
Their sweets will ne'er depart :
Their fragrance with their shading
Is treasured in the heart.

And oft in drear December,
When winter frosts the pane,
Their beauty we remember,
And bright they bloom again.

Then, love, though death may sever
The dearest earthly tie,
E'en then 'tis joy forever
To sadly, sadly sigh.

THE CONGRESSMAN.

"A Daniel come to judgment! yea, a Daniel!"

I stood entranced, and listen'd to him speaking,—
Columbia's Cicero, ne'er match'd before!
He said the opposite party's hands were reeking
With crime and with their country's priceless gore;
And that unless (here 'twas sublimely squeaking)
They made him Congressman, all hope was o'er,
And that they'd have no homes, no wives, no nation,
And ours would be like Rome's last degradation.

My blood was curdled by his words of fire,
And, as I gazed at his Websterian brow,
Majestic (Homer's was not broader, higher,
Which, awe-inspiring, made me humbly bow),
And saw his long-tail'd coat—a saint's attire—
Hang down in sweeping fold, I wonder'd how
A man, through copious brain and lore and action,
Could reach th' exalted demagogue of faction.

I saw him smiling bland at the election,
Talk sweetly to the lowest as by rote,
Shake hands with men from this, that rural section,
And ask about their crops, nor care a groat,

And hurry back and forth in each direction,
In servile schemes to catch a toper's vote,—
But ne'er reveal the amount of wholesale stealing
His stretchy conscience bore with hope of healing !

L' ENVOY.

There was a time, ere schemers were elected,
That intellect was honor'd, not the seat.
Oh for an Adams, Franklin, resurrected !
But no ! I could not ask them thieves to meet.*
Let party drop,—'tis malice ill directed ;
It lifts aloft the smiling, brainless cheat.
Guelf, Ghibelline, let not paltry feuds dissever,
Let Freedom, Justice be your sole endeavor !

O Liberty ! a nation's greatest treasure,
As pure as maiden virtue undefiled,
Long may it be our pride, our jealous pleasure,
To guard thee as we love thy favorite child !
And ne'er forget that slavery is the measure
Of man's most brutal crimes, debased, reviled.
Mark, sovereign people, history tells the story
That nations reap their due, if woe or glory.

* This is plain talk ; but I need only refer to the Credit Mobilier fraud for justification. The "Salary-Grabbers," in the estimation of a great part of the nation, merely adopted an indirect method of stealing from the public ; and the members of the Tammany Ring, though not Congressmen, are just examples of many of the scheming politicians who insinuate themselves into our legislative halls to prescribe laws for the *welfare* of our country.

A FRAGMENT.

'Tis night, and all is dark ;
The air is damp and chill ;
I hear the distant watch-dog bark
With sullen, moody will.
Now even that is still !
And now the night-wind's sighing only,
And heaven itself is black and dreary :
Thus, life is dark and drear and lonely
Till Hope herself full oft is weary :
Oh, hark that voice so loud and shrill,—
The ghostly whippowil !

CRAB-APPLE BLOSSOMS.

FROM their death in the May to December,
And still till they blossom again,
With pleasure I fondly remember
The crab-apple buds in the lane;
For their fragrance returns as I ponder,
With a spell that I long to retain;
Thus, often in fancy I wander
'Neath the crab-apple grove in the lane.

Leave the lily untouch'd in its splendor;
Let the poppy still wave with the grain;
Let the violet, modest and tender,
By its musical brooklet remain;
Nor weave, of the olive to crown me,*
A chaplet I care not to gain;
But entwine a sweet garland around me
Of crab-apple buds from the lane.

As my thoughts ever turn to my childhood,
And glow with its rapture again,
Thus I turn to the dale and the wildwood,
Where the flowers in loveliness reign;

* A crown of the wild olive was the reward of the victor in the Olympic games. The mythical account of its transportation from the hyperborean regions to Olympia by Hercules is given by Pindar.

But none that are born of the showers,
In woodland or valley or plain,
Are so sweet as the crab-apple flowers
That empurple the grove in the lane.

The crab-apple petals o'ersprinkle
The grass at my feet, in the lane,
While I listen to catch the faint tinkle
That is borne from the herd on the plain.
The baldric of midnight o'erspans me,
I bow 'neath the moon-lighted fane,
And my heart rises up and unmans me,
As I stand all alone in the lane.

MELANCHOLY.

I.

TOUCH me not, oh, touch me not !
Let no word be spoken ;
Life is sweetest when forgot ;—
Leave the charm unbroken.

Silence music's sweetest song !
Oh that voice could borrow
Half the strains that melt along
In my dream of sorrow.

Mellow sadness, ever sweet,
Blissful, blissful seeming ;

Weary heart, oh, cease to beat !
Thou disturb'st my dreaming.

Touch me not, for I am bless'd ;
Raise this mantle never ;
Let it softly o'er me rest,—
Let me dream forever.

II.

Speak ! Oh, let me hear thy voice,
Prove thy love this hour ;
Speak !—if life is worth the choice,—
Break this spell of power.

Press my chilly hand in thine,
Till it warmly thrill me ;
Let thy soul, pervading mine,
Make thy presence fill me.

Dark is life, and vain are dreams,
Scarcely worth the knowing ;
Like the clouds when summer beams
Lend them empty glowing.

Sing that melting song to me,
Till it strength inspire,
Till the dreamy phantoms flee,—
Fill me with its fire !

THE SULTAN OF THE INDIES.

A TALE.

THE Sultan of the Indies, famed
For virtues (here a few are named :
Considering love a sacred duty,—
His harem large, a blaze of beauty,—
Strict following as the Prophet led,
Cutting off each offender's head,
And sooth, save when forgot, they say,
For offering five long prayers a day),
Had, in a wise and peaceful reign,
Spread plenty o'er his broad domain,
And by example, virtue, knowledge,
Had made his palace seem a college.
And sages came from many a race,
To learn new wisdom from his grace ;
Peace, Truth, and Justice, hand in hand,
Were blithely marching o'er the land ;
And on the nation, thrice blest,
The hand of Allah seem'd to rest.

From starry realms above the skies,
Where beam enamoring Houris' eyes,
An angel once, quite sick of pleasure
(Eternity gives endless leisure),
Descended to this humbler sphere,
To heal the sick and dry the tear.

Attired in quaint and queer disguise,
He seem'd a hermit chaste and wise,
Or saint who, by benign fatality,
Was born to foster man's morality.
The Sultan was so far renown'd
That not one man the angel found—
As o'er the hot and dusty way
He humbly journey'd day by day—
Who did not speak a goodly word
Of wise and mighty Zomaherd.

With toil and frugal fare content,
The angel mused, as on he went :
“ 'Tis strange that one who never sinn'd is
The mighty Sultan of the Indies !”
And then quoth he, “ A bad prediction
I seldom make, if truth or fiction ;
But yet methinks I can rehearse
The Koran's contents, and a verse
Expressly says that mortals were—
And always will be—found to err ;*
Though some, of course, are worse than others,
Still, man is man, and all are brothers.
So, sooth, I think, while in disguise,
I'll seek this Sultan just and wise,
And, if he prove a human being,
His weakness I'll not fail of seeing.”

The custom was, the good and wise
Should come before the Sultan's eyes,

* This is a hazarded passage ; I never read Sale's translation of the Koran.

That from him, as the waters flow
And leave their fount for vales below,
His pure and holy inspiration
Would cleanse the morals of the nation.
The angel humbly went before
The Sultan, bow'd, and kiss'd the floor;
While fifty beauteous maidens rare
With music fill'd the perfumed air,
And with a soft, voluptuous tread
They danced. Then thus the angel said:
"Commander of the Faithful, great,
To-day it is my happy fate
To kneel before the peerless goal
I long have sought with heart and soul;
And, as the Ganges seeks the ocean
With slow but sure and ceaseless motion,
I come to grant this very hour
(Suffice to say I have the power)
Whate'er you wish; in truth, believe
You need but ask and you receive
Aught earth affords, or heaven divine.
Think well, and speak,—it shall be thine."

"Just let me see," the Sultan said
(He cough'd, and scratch'd his worthy head):
"I think the harem's full; if right,
I've fifty fair as Houris bright;
And sure enough's enough of love,
Though beauties smile from heaven above.
As to domestic life serene,
I've children two, a lovely queen,
And—bah! I want no more of pleasure.—
I have it! Give enough of treasure

To equal all the kings of earth
And princes born of noble birth,
That all shall stand in dazzled fear.
Ah ! list me, Sir Magician, Seer,
Just let whate'er I touch or hold
Be changed to pure and massive gold."

The spell was wrought as soon as said ;
And, lo ! the plumes upon his head,
And robe that fell in ample fold,
Were bright ! He stood incased in gold !
And, just to further try the charm,
The Sultan touch'd his Vizier's arm.
He turn'd to gold,—a statue gleaming !
Were emirs, eunuchs, all a dreaming ?
The Sultan, 'tween a smile and tear,
Commanded wine and jolly cheer ;
And while they pass'd the wassail-wine,
" The Vizier's health, and yours, and mine !"
The Sultan quite jocosely said,
As up he raised his vase of red ;
But, lo ! the wine, so ruddy, mellow,
Was changed to brightness cold and yellow !
He dropp'd his cup of virgin ore,
And spurn'd it 'cross the palace floor ;
While all his slaves, with fear and dread,
Threw down their bowls and wildly fled,
Leaving their Sultan to his fate,—
The mighty Sultan, wise and great !

Well, well, in short, to end the story,
The Sultan died in all his glory ;

For—left to starve—full well you know,
 Though gold is potent here below,
 The stomach, when we crave to eat,
 Must have some less expensive meat.

L'ENVOY.

And now the moral of my tale
 Is this: That mortals all are frail ;
 That e'en the best (if tried in season)
 Oft quite forget their virtue, reason,
 And weave a glittering mesh of sinning
 Before they think they are beginning ;
 That many of those who love to hear
 Their own names lauded far and near
 Deserve—if known—not half the praise
 Due humbler men, who pass their days
 And never don a saintly guise,
 But do their best,—for such are wise.

THAT OLD BEECH-TREE.

With sad delight,
 Through memory's flight,
 I see that beech-tree towering high,
 Whose cooling shade
 O'erstretch'd the glade
 Where oft we wander'd, you and I ;

And rustic seat,
Oh, rare retreat !
Form'd by the rugged roots grotesque ;
And ancient mill
In ruins still ;
And mossy cliff so picturesque.

Ah ! still they seem
A rapturous dream,
Elysian isles, those days of yore !
How oft the mind
Can pleasure find
In dreaming former pleasures o'er !

The thrush's song
The whole day long
Resounded from that arbor-tree ;
But, ah ! I thought
The joy it brought
Was not like that which came with thee !

Most dear to me
Is that old beech-tree,
Upon whose trunk, where lichens grow,
With lover's flame,
For rural fame,
I carved, "I kiss'd my darling Flo."

SOMNUS AND THANATOS.

ONE night I lay and mark'd the hours
 Drag weary on,—each seem'd a day,—
As solemn toll'd from neighboring towers :
 Oh, God, how slow they ebb'd away !

Too weak to rise, I pray'd to Sleep ;
 But even dreams, that most despise,
Were blessings bann'd, I could not reap ;
 I wish'd for Death to seal my eyes.

I saw the moonlight cross the floor
 As Cynthia's car roll'd up the sky ;
I heard the night-wind's spectral roar ;
 Heard passing footsteps echo, die.

Distorted shadows deck'd the wall,
 Queer, shapeless, as in frenzy drawn ;
I watch'd them flutter, rise, and fall,
 Till oil and bickering light were gone.

And then, methought, without a fear,
 I felt, as did the conscious air,
That Sleep and Death were standing near ;
 At last, at last they heard my prayer !

With torch upturn'd, beside the bed
 The brothers plainer, plainer grew ;

The cheeks of Sleep were moist and red,
But sallow Death's were ghastly, blue.

Then Sleep advanced, with presence bland,
And whisper'd, "Shall I still the pain?
Speak! shall I place my soothing hand
Upon thy fever'd, aching brain?"

And Death then spake, in dismal tone:
"Shall I dissolve this spell of life?
Say, is it worth a parting moan
To quit this scene of pain and strife?"

I lay dejected, weak, depress'd,
And answer'd both without a sigh:
"O Sleep, O Death, give peace and rest:
I reckon not if to live or die!"

Then Death replied (each word a groan),
"What! you, who see me, dare my might?"
Astonish'd, fled; left Sleep alone:
I dream'd a dream of calm delight.

SONG.

'Tis oft that I dream when I'm waking,
'Tis oft that I live in a dream ;
Then morning from heaven is breaking
With a pure and angelical gleam.

My heart is elated with gladness,
And throbs with a joy from above ;
For rapture o'erpowers the sadness,
And clothes it in brightness and love.

Soft music around me is stealing,
Like songs that are borne on the sea ;
The music itself is but feeling
So tenderly wafted to me !

O sweet, happy spell, do not leave me,
But stay till the time when I die ;
O Spirits of Dreamland, receive me,
And for Lethe I never will sigh !

SINGING.

SWEETLY fell the song of Minnie
On the drowsy summer air,
That with ripples kiss'd the tresses
Of her golden, sunny hair,
As she wander'd down the hill-side,
And for flowers upon the lea,
Blithely singing, gayly singing
To the valley-bells,—and me.

From the little mossy grotto,
To the pleasant forest sheen,
All the flowers, birds, and Nature,
Bow'd to Minnie as their queen ;
And the wild-birds ceased their singing
When they heard her sweeter lay
Through the distant tree-tops ringing,
Till it, mellow, fled away.

Near the spring beneath the maple,
Where the checker'd shadows sway,
Little Minnie wove fair garlands
Of the stately lilies gay,
In her glorious, rustic beauty,
With sweet, guileless, happy glee,
Singing shyly, lowly singing
To this lovely world,—and me.

When the misty shades of twilight
Settled o'er the mountain's crest,
And the crimson clouds of evening
Lower'd brightly in the west,
By the cottage on the upland,
'Neath the fragrant linden-tree,
Was my Minnie, softly singing,
Sweetly singing,—*all* to me !

THE VAGABOND'S RETURN.

I.

'Tis balmy eve, and from the blushing west
The sunlight falls aslant upon the trees :
All Nature seems to sleep in peaceful rest
(Save but the aspen pattering in the breeze),
Receiving benedictions from the blest.

II.

Up, up the path that oft I trod before !
Stop ! must I look ? Ah, there 'tis all in view !
The same old mansion gray, the oaks, the door
That closed behind me when I bade adieu
Unto my childhood's home for evermore.

III.

He sold it ere my father's dust was cold :
'Twas just ; a friend must ever needs be *just*.

Still, in imagination, as of old,
'Tis mine, a sepulchre of sacred dust,—
Remember'd happier days are in the mould.

IV.

I, wanton, crush'd a flower low to the earth,
A life, a beauty ; but I had the will !
Does that atone ? Not so ; a thing of worth,
Though paltry, has its special place to fill :
The ravager shall surely feel the dearth.

V.

How stubbornly life drags the chain of years !
Each link so firmly clasps its fellow-links
That oft full many a weight of woe and tears
Must clog it ere the chain asunder sinks
And gives the soul the rest it wishes, fears.

VI.

A bark when anchor'd rests within the bay ;
But loose its moorings, and the fitful sea
Wafts, wafts it hither, thither, far away,
Till, weary of the waif, with ghoulish glee
It closes o'er its mazed and helpless prey.

VII.

They all are dead,—my mother, father,—gone.
She was the last to die ; as summers fade,
She vanish'd from me ere the truth would dawn ;
For death had crept upon her shade by shade ;
And heaven claim'd its own, but *I* live on.

VIII.

Have I a heart? or is it but a stone,
Whose function is mechanical at best?
Since last it throb'd with joy, e'en years have flown!
I scarce am sure it beats within my breast:
The sun has set, and I am all alone.

ADDRESS TO THE COMET OF
JULY, 1874.

O THOU! illustrious minister of some
Far-distant starry court of heaven, whose
Resplendent train is more magnificent
Than earth's vainglorious monarchs can afford,
Whence comest thou? What suns of dazzling light
And verdant worlds, perchance more near the verge
Of God's immeasurable universe
(If verge there be), hast thou swept past, as now
Thou bearest down toward our dimmer sun
And lesser world, with flight resistless? What
Oft-noted constellations, whose bright stars
Are peopled, haply, by a higher race,—
More heavenly in its essence than is man,—
Hast thou, returning in thy ceaseless tour
Through realms of space, made wonder, pleased to
view
Thy pensile tresses bright against the sky?

And thou wilt vanish quickly as thou camest.
Thou art a type of greatness here on earth,
Which dawns, like early morning, dim-described
Then grows in splendor till meridian beams
O'ercome the eye, then wanes to twilight eve,
And goes we know not whither,—e'en as thou.
But thou wilt oft return as ages pass,
And many an eye will turn to gaze on thee
That now is uncreated, sightless, void,
Which then, perhaps, may hold in fiery life
This cold and senseless clay beneath my feet.
In ages long since past, ere yet the earth
To youthful bloom was bursting into life,—
Like some fair maid on verge of womanhood,—
Perchance thou first didst come. In after-years,
Long ere the age of man, thou didst behold
Full many a land arise and pass away,
Like fair Atlantis whelm'd beneath the wave,
Nor leave a trace behind ; and thou hast seen
The ocean roll o'er this we call our home.
And, still returning, thou new changes saw'st
Come o'er our paltry, mighty world, like those
That flit across the face in smiles and frowns,
Shadowing forth the soul that swells within.
And then thou didst see Man his station take,
Ruler o'er bird and beast, himself a slave
To passion, pride, and deepest degradation ;
Saw'st race succeeding race, each mighty in
Its rapine of an hour, like clouds that flee
Before the wind, and vanish ; conquerors,
Ambitious e'en as Bonaparte, unknown
To fame, arise (with rude-shaped arms of rock)

And slay a nation ; die, and be forgotten.
 Next thou didst mark Achilles at the gate
 Of Priam's city, with his heaven-wrought armor ;
 Or Paris seek his Helen's warm embrace.
 Then Greece and Rome, the glorious of the earth,
 The daughters fair of Freedom, eldest-born,
 Thou saw'st in all their grandeur, learn'd, polite,
 Ere yet the smiling vampire, luxury,
 Had suck'd their life-blood,—ere they justly perish'd.
 And now thou dost behold an age refined,—
 That is, we are dissemblers, not sincere,—
 An age of wisdom : sages, deep, profound,
 Give names to trifles by a wise device,
 Yea, call a wild-flower by some learned name,
 Yet comprehend not how or why it grew !
 Why say not, 'Tis a finger-print of God ?

O thou ! so grand, sublime, refulgent ! Thou
 That, through the pall of superstition, seem'dst
 Dread chastisement to scourge an erring world,—
 For man is vain while conscious of his guilt,
 And fain would deem the universe for *him*,—
 Thou art to me delight, a pleasing theme
 For contemplation. And, in fancy's flight,
 I raise me heavenward, and behold thee move
 With swiftness inconceivable, and feel
 My soul, half victor o'er its clod of earth,
 Catch kindred glory from thy splendor.

Thou

Wouldst have no terror in mine eyes, e'en if
 The laws that guide the stellar wheels of heaven

Were such that thou might'st crush this beauteous world
(For some have vainly dream'd that thou art dense),
And dash its wreck and blazing fragments back
Into the reign of chaos! Such would be
A consummation scarcely to be fear'd,
So grand and glorious were Earth's funeral pyre !

LINES TO MARY.

AH, Mary! if thy winning grace
But deck'd this tribute to thy name,
These lines would ever hold a place
Within the highest niche of fame.

Or if thy tapering fingers white
Had penn'd this lay,—so lowly now,—
Ah! then to read were pure delight ;
Ah! then to list were sweet as thou.

Or, if thy lips had read this o'er,
Each word would aye their sweetness bear ;
Then honor, fame, nor treasured store
Could with this worthless scrap compare.

THE FOREST LAKE.

LIKE a plain of silvery lustre,
Quivering 'neath the evening breeze,
Girdled round by hills, where cluster
Groves of sturdy forest-trees,—
Thus the lake, in maiden beauty,
Lies so calmly down below,
That the oaks seem guards on duty,
Bound to watch who come and go.

O'er the water droop the willows,
With their leafy branches gay
Sweeping all the little billows
As they, smiling, dance away ;
High o'erhead, the tree-tops, swaying
Dreamy 'mid the waning light,
Cast their shadows, softly playing
O'er the lake, serene and bright.

Scallop'd ferns are proudly growing
From the creviced rocky ledge,
And the zephyrs, past them going,
Bend them to the water's edge,—
Bend them down so gently, kindly,
Till the waters kiss their tips:
Ah! they seem to kiss as blindly,
Sweetly, as young lovers' lips.

On the water calmly sleeping,
Fragrant lilies lie at rest,
Children in their mother's keeping,
Fondly to her bosom press'd ;
But, when wavelets tipp'd with brightness
Shake them till they, bowing, wake,
Then, while dancing, robed in whiteness,
They're the Naiads of the lake.

When with moonbeams earth is gleaming,
And the hills in silence lie,
When the lake, while all are dreaming,
Wears the semblance of the sky,
Ouphes and fays, in bluebells boating,
Sail the lake the joyous night,
And, 'tis said, on lilies floating,
Sing and dance with wild delight.

EARTHLY BLISS.

I've bask'd in beauty brightest,
Where ruby glasses rung ;
I've been where hearts were lightest,
Where sweetest songs were sung ;
But when the earthly measure
Of bliss was brimming o'er,
My soul grew sick of pleasure,—
Ah! sadder than before.

I've learn'd that even sorrow
Must surely fade away ;
That many a bright to-morrow
Will be a drear to-day :
So, oft, the moments' blisses
I gather ere they flee ;
But even Beauty's kisses
Scarce give a thrill to me !

And thus, if hope were only
Entwined with earthly strife,
How empty, sad, and lonely
Were this our lower life !
But oft I, dreaming, wander
To purer bliss above ;
And, lo ! e'en as I ponder,
I feel celestial love !

THE MOSS ROSE.*

A LEGEND tells, in olden time
(Perchance 'twas in some Orient clime)
A rose-bush grew with balmy shade,
'Neath which a beauteous seraph made,
Of flowers fair, a pleasant seat,
Quite shielded from the noonday heat.

By chance he slept, and pass'd an hour
Within the fragrant rosy bower.
The Queen of Flowers watch'd with care
To screen the sleeping seraph fair,
And bade the zephyrs passing by
To whisper with a softer sigh.

The seraph woke refresh'd, and said,
While rising from his flowery bed,
“ My friend, sweet Rose, for your kind task
I'll give you aught whate'er you ask ;
For I am from that heavenly land,
And can bestow what you command.”

The Rose, with odorous breath, replied,
“ Sweet seraph, all my branches hide

* This epigram—written earlier than any other in this collection—was composed before the age of fifteen. The fable, I think, is borrowed from some translation from the German.

With mossy robe so rich and green
That I shall seem a Naiad queen."
Upon the bush the moss still grows ;
And thus we have the sweet Moss Rose.

HERE'S A HEALTH.

HERE'S a health to innocence o'erflowing ;
Riches, fame, and vaunted noble birth,
All are like the rainbow's empty glowing :
Here's a health to plain and simple worth !

Yes, I'll drink at once to worth and beauty,
Heavenly sisters join'd by mutual bands ;
Wheresoe'er is virtue, there, in duty,
Both congenial sisters link their hands.

Hearts of such no words portray or measure ;
Language ne'er their depth of soul express'd ;
Theirs is peace, by far the greatest treasure ;
They, of all, are truly nearest bless'd.

Here's a sparkling goblet, seeming gladness,
Here's a tear, I'll quaff it with the wine ;
Here's a health to hearts o'erwrought with sadness,
For their fire will smoulder low as mine.

Mighty minds, divineness in their moulding,
Oft, in fettering cares of life, expire ;

Many a Burns with genius all-beholding
Lives, the child of want,—and journeys higher.

Love ! a lasting health to thee I tender,
Sweet and peerless passion of the heart !
What is empty pomp or gilded splendor
To the charm thy presence doth impart ?

Deep ! a mother's love is deep as heaven ;
Blissful is the troth that lovers plight ;
Oh, the joy of love return'd and given !
Love, thou art the talisman up to light !

Here's to those whom life's dark-heaving ocean
Casts, a wreck, upon its hidden shoals,
And to curbless passion's dread emotion,
Leaving blackness where its billow rolls.

Here's a deep libation—Pity, take it !
I will quaff the dregs that still remain ;
O thou Goddess ! melt each heart, and make it
Feel that kindred tears are not in vain.

Judge thyself,—forgive another's failing.
Speak, ye vain ! was ne'er a fault your own ?
O'er life's maelstrom how our barks are sailing
Oft depends on how the winds have blown.

Give me nor display, nor wealth, nor power,
Nor thy heart, for mine were purchased dear ;
Give (I ask no more, a priceless dower)
Most in least,—a sympathetic tear.

Here's to friendship true and false together :
 To the true, because it is divine !
 May affection never cease to tether
 Heart to heart ; here's mine upon the wine.

To the false, for baseness still receiveth
 Duly guerdon, e'en as gentle worth ;
 'Tis enough no mind itself deceiveth :
 Self-condemn'd, 'tis Tophet upon earth.

Life ! thy checker'd scenes of sorrow, pleasure,
 Wisdom, folly, penury, display,
 Blending, form this being's little measure,
 Changeful as a fitful April day.

Pleasure stands afar, with beauty laden,
 Smiles and beckons, waving crowns of joy ;
 But, when fain to clasp the willing maiden,
 Back recoils the heart,—her kisses cloy.

All our sorrow, passion, pride, and folly,
 Haply serve at last to cleanse, refine ;
 Mirth is pleasing oft,—so melancholy :
 Life is fleeting as this draught of wine !

Thou, my Country ! land forever peerless,
 Smiling 'neath the standard of the free,
 Sons thou hast, as were their fathers, fearless
 To uphold thy flag or die for thee !

Here's a health ! may God of heaven defend you,
 Thou dear native Land, and starry Sheet !
 May your glory last till centuries lend you
 Laurels thick as leaves at Autumn's feet !

LINES •

WRITTEN UPON SEEING A RAW SERVANT D'AMOUR ESCORTING
HIS LADYE-LOVE DOWN THE STREET.

I MET a damsel,—queen of queens !
With beauty passing great
(Her ma avers she's in her teens,
I'll swear she's twenty-eight) ;
And by her side there strode a youth
Whom love had deep imbued ;
Methought he was full meek, in sooth,
And, ah ! most sore subdued.

His toes, though fain to touch the ground,
Were undecided where ;
About him seem'd an air profound
Of settled, deep despair.
As pleasant eve I bade them see,
Mine eyes with pity view'd
That youth should aye so pensive be,
And, ah ! so sore subdued !

O youths, beware a common fate,
That truly doth appall ;
Oh, think how (ere it be too late)
Love maketh slaves of all.

Beware the charm of Beauty's eye,
Else each, a stricken man,
Will feel subdued and plaintive sigh :
Resist it if ye can !

A FRAGMENT.

ON, on through life I pass alone,
For none are kindred to my heart ;
Perchance, like some discordant tone,
I live without a counterpart.

But oft a fancied form I greet,
Whose presence is most sweet to me,
That bids me pity those I meet
Who ne'er are what they *seem* to be.

SWEET EYES OF BLUE.

I'LL love you ever,
Forget you never ;
Though hearts may sever,
 I'll still be true ;
With kisses burning,
And fondest yearning,
My heart's returning,
 Sweet Eyes, to you !

I kneel before you,
For love implore you,
For love adore you,
 Soft Eyes of Blue !
O arms of whiteness,
O heart of lightness,
O eyes of brightness,
 I love but you !

I've seen the river
'Neath moonlight quiver
And gleam and shiver,
 Like diamonds shine ;
But all its glory
Is dun and hoary
Beside that story,
 Sweet Eyes, of thine !

O happy Aden,*
With beauty laden,
There is a maiden,
 With Eyes of Blue,
More sweetly whiling
My time with smiling
And love beguiling
 Than dwells with you !

Soft arms around me,
Sweet charms that bound me,
Bright eyes that found me,
 Your love is true !
My heart can feel it ;
You still reveal it,
And ne'er conceal it,
 Sweet Eyes of Blue !

* " For thee in those bright isles is built a bower
Blooming as Aden in its earliest hour."

Byron's " Bride of Abydos."





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